The Invaluable Indigene: Local Expertise in the Imperial Context

Gaikokujin and *Giyōfū*: Western Architecture in Japan

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FIG 1 In this paper I want to address two things: firstly, how Western architecture first came into public view in nineteenth-century Japan and secondly, how it was subsequently absorbed into the vernacular. The first suggests the result of foreign or colonial interference, and the second, the indigenous population's response to it. However, in the case of Japan, this foreign or colonial interference was not the result of outside aggression but rather something actually invited or self-inflicted. **FIG 2** Prior to US Commodore Matthew Perry's visits of 1853 and 1854 Japan was a country closed to the rest of the world. His gunboat diplomacy led to the signing, in 1858, of the five Ansei or Unequal Treaties. These Treaties, which opened up ports to Western traders, left Japan vulnerable and, **FIG 3** if it was not to be aggressively colonised by one of the great Western powers — Britain, France, America, Russia or even the Netherlands — it had, in a sense, to colonise itself. Thus much of the official architecture built following the restoration of the Meiji Emperor in 1868 was done with the intention of showing the West that Japan was on an equal footing and not prey to foreign domination

FIG 4 This self-colonisation, as I call it, was achieved by inviting *Gaikokujin* or 'foreign-country-persons', to come and educate the Japanese in the Western tradition — whether that be political, military, scientific, medical, educational or architectural. This they did by example and through formal academic instruction. Meanwhile, the appearance if not the methods of Western architecture was quickly seized upon by the 'untrained' or indigenous Japanese and reproduced widely. This is what is called *Giyōfū* architecture, for *Giyōfū* translates as 'imitate-Western-style'.

FIG 5 My first two examples show the similarities and the differences between these architectures. On the left is the Hisaya Iwasaki mansion in Yushima, Tokyo, built in 1896 by one of the earliest *Gaikokujin*, the Englishman Josiah Conder. On the right is the Police Office at Honjo, built by the carpenter — the 'invaluable indigene' — Tomizo Kakyta in 1883. Both are timber-framed structures employing the Classical orders, but whereas the Iwasaki mansion appears competent, if by 1896 rather dated, the Police Office appears imitative and unresolved.

Conder, who had arrived in Japan in 1877, was not the first *Gaikokujin* to be employed by the Japanese government to build their buildings. **FIG 6** This was Thomas Waters, an Irish engineer from Birr in County Offaly, who built the Imperial Mint at Osaka in 1871. Although untrained in architecture, he was able to turn out a credible elevation even if the columns lacked entasis and their spacing was a little generous. **FIG 7** Waters had come to Japan by way of Hong Kong and China and what he had seen there in terms of colonial and sub-tropical architecture was replicated in the *Sempukan*, the official residence of the Commissioner, built next to

the Mint on the banks of the Yodo river. **FIG 8** The scale and visibility of this complex not only demonstrated Western learning but also, more importantly, that Japan (which had previously used the Mexican dollar) was now a unified country minting its own national currency, the yen. **FIG 9** As if to further demonstrate the political stability of the country and the authority of the recently reinstated Emperor, Waters built, in 1874, the Takebashi Barracks close to the Imperial Palace. It was a classical design that seemed to draw upon his experience of Irish architecture, **FIG 10** particularly the Crinkill Barracks in Birr. In as much as that building in Ireland was, to some people's mind, an expression of colonial domination, so this one in Tokyo might be seen in the same way, but now the result of self-colonisation.

FIG 11 In 1872, the central Tokyo districts of Ginza, Kyōbashi and Tsukiji, comprising some 3,000 buildings housing 50,000 people, were burnt to the ground. Within days, the government's Council of State, the *Dajōkan*, issued a plan for the rebuilding of the area in fire-resistant materials as an Imperial capital in the Western image, once again pre-empting the potential coloniser at their own game. **FIG 12** Waters, who had build brick kilns and taught the Japanese builders brick making for the Imperial Mint, built a gridded city of stuccoed brickwork with broad avenues flanked by colonnaded elevations. The result, although clearly modern and Western, was not a great success for the masonry construction did not suit the hot and humid climate, nor did it suit the instability brought about by the frequent earthquakes. **FIG 13** After fifty years these damp and mouldy buildings were largely destroyed in the Great Kanto earthquake of 1923, which also brought down Tokyo's first

skyscraper, the Ryounkaku, an amusement tower built in 1880 at Asakusa, by another *Gaikokujin*, the Scottish engineer William Burton.

Waters, Burton and the other *Gaikokujin* were allowed, by the nature of their contracts, to stay in Japan for only a few years, not time enough to properly educate the Japanese in the Western ways of doing things. **FIG 14** However this changed when in 1877 the twenty-four year old Josiah Conder, fresh from William Burges's London office, became the first Professor of Architecture at the Imperial College of Engineering in Tokyo. It was his job to train the first Japanese architects.

Conder was also appointed architect to the Ministry of Public Works **FIG 15** and it was in this capacity that he imposed his vision of a great university, based clearly upon Burges's scheme for Trinity College, Connecticut, upon which he had worked. As Professor of Architecture he established a curriculum that laid great emphasis upon the artistic education of the architect. He had them read, in English, Burges's *Art Applied to Industry* (1865) and Albert Rosengarten's *History of the Styles of Architecture* (1876). He tested them on Western architecture, asking them to compare the Grecian and Roman Doric orders, to explain the principal characteristics of the Byzantine style, or to give a brief description of the architecture of ancient Egypt. But it was also a curriculum which emphasized the importance of Japanese architecture. As he told an audience at the College in 1878:

> You have your monuments …
>
> to the appreciation of which I am forever urging you.

As a demonstration of Western architecture in Japan, Conder's initial efforts were quite different to Waters's. Whereas Waters, in a colonialist manner, simply imposed what he knew, Conder, in a more ameliorative way tried to provide a contemporary architecture suited to the climate of the country. Initially, this comprised a fusion of Venetian Gothic and what he called a pseudo-Saracenic style, hot-country architectures then still fashionable in Britain. **FIG 16** His first major building, completed in 1881, was the Museum in Ueno Park that drew heavily upon the museums which he knew from London. It was, like the new South Kensington Museum, built of red brick **FIG 17** and it adopted the plan of Sir John Soane's Dulwich Picture Gallery. This was followed, in 1883, by the *Rokumeikan* or Deer-cry Hall, **FIG 18** a residential building for foreign guests located near the Imperial Palace. Promoted by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Kaoru Inoue, it was very much a demonstration of self-colonisation and, like the Imperial Mint before it, **FIG 19** an attempt to show that Japan had matured and modernized enough for Inoue, as Minister of Foreign Affairs, to challenge and renegotiate the Unequal Treaties. However, in this aim he was unsuccessful and was soon relieved of his position.

FIG 20 By now Conder's first students had graduated from the Imperial College and were beginning to build their own buildings in the Western style. The top student, Tatsuno Kingo, had taken over as Professor of Architecture although Conder still taught at the College. Tatsuno, who in 1881 had traveled to Europe and worked briefly in William Burges's London office, emerged as the most important of the first generation of Japanese architects trained in the Western tradition. His buildings were accomplished essays in this foreign language and serve to highlight the

disparity between the architecture introduced by the *Gaikokujin* and the *Giyōfū* architecture that grew up alongside it. **FIG 21** His best work was for the Bank of Japan for whom he built the headquarters in Tokyo in 1896. **FIG 22** Drawn equally from Bayaert and Janssens's National Bank in Brussels and Sir John Soane's Bank of England in London, **FIG 23** it was an assemblage of parts gleaned from his European tours and demonstrative of the authority of the Emperor and the strength of the yen. Completed the year after Japan's success in the Sino-Japan war, it was as much a visible demonstration of the country's wealth as a reminder of her growing presence on the world stage, something which her success in the Russo-Japanese war a decade later resoundingly confirmed. By then, fifty years after Commodore Perry's unwelcome visit, Japan was no longer the self-coloniser, but a colonial power herself

FIG 24 Meanwhile *Giyōfū* architecture had been spreading quickly across Japan, initially following the western traders and missionaries, but soon being absorbed into the vernacular of the country. **FIG 25** During this time of Japan's seclusion the Dutch trading post of Dejima, established on an artificial island in Nagasaki harbour in 1641, was for over 200 years really the only place where Western architecture, **FIG 26** in the sense of hinged doors, glazed windows and Western-style stairs could be found. But it was off-limits to the Japanese. With the opening up of the first Treaty Ports in 1858, Western traders and missionaries began to build elsewhere, using local craftsmen and labour. **FIG 27** Thomas Glover's house at Nagasaki, built by the master-carpenter Kyama Hidenoshin in 1863, was a simple, colonial-style dwelling based upon what Glover knew from China yet displayed some references to

Western classicism, **FIG 28** such as keystones in the lattice-work arcade and simple Tuscan capitals to the wooden columns. The construction was a traditional post-and-beam timber frame and walls of bamboo laths infilled with layered clay, mud and seaweed, and finished off with lime plaster. **FIG 29** For the house that he built two years later for William Alt on the adjacent site, Hidenoshin used masonry construction with stone Tuscan columns supporting the timber cornice. Contemporaneous with these was the Ōura Catholic Church in Nagasaki, built in 1865 by Hidenoshin for the Société des Mission Etrangères de Paris. Based upon François Mansart's church of the Val de Grace in Paris, it was the design of the Father Louis-Theodore Furet and erected under the supervision of two serving priests. Colonial, one might call it, yet in its interpretation so far removed from the original source that the hand of the invaluable indigene is clearly uppermost.

As word of mouth and the availability of images of Western buildings spread the lessons of Western architecture across Japan, so the indigenous architecture began to change. **FIG 30** The Customs House built in 1869 at the newly opened Treaty Port of Niigata combined Western windows, **FIG 31** albeit horizontal sliders, hinged doors, arches and cornices with Japanese *namako* walling, a fire-proof construction method where the gaps between diamond-shaped hanging slates were sealed with plaster rolls. **FIG 32** The exterior of the *Enzetsujan* (the Hall of Public Speaking) built at Keiō University, Tokyo, in 1875, was similarly finished in *namako* walling, **FIG 33** but the form it took was symmetrical with a central, pedimented porch and a gallery around three sides of the interior. **FIG 34** Such clear symmetry, however, was unusual in *Giyōfū* architecture. At the schoolhouse in Matsumoto, built with both

classical and Buddhist detailing by the local carpenter Tateishi Seiju in 1876, **FIG 35** symmetry is implied in the elevations but on closer inspection, it is misaligned. **FIG 36** Similarly, the floor plans, **FIG 37** which in Western classical architecture would have had a direct relationship to the elevation, appears here almost independent of it. **FIG 38** Tateishi had studied Western buildings in Yokohama and Tokyo, recording their details in his sketchbook. **FIG 39** Here the second *Mitsui-gumi* (Mitsui bank) building in Tokyo, built by Schimizu Gihachi in 1874, can be recognised, as can the cupola and the stair balusters which Tateishi later replicated in the schoolhouse.

FIG 40 The presence of Western classical detailing, such as cornices and rusticated quoin stones, as well as the disengagement between elevation and plan, can be attributed to the use of construction handbooks, such as *Shinsen Taisho Hinagata Daizen* (a collection of prototypes of newly selected grand designs) published in 1883. These provided elevations and details but rarely demonstrated the proportions of the parts or the relationship between elevation and plan so central to the classical language of architecture. **FIG 41** The Police Office at Honjo, which we have seen before, has all the necessary components — a pediment supported by fluted Corinthian columns, quoin stones and pedimented sash windows. Yet their application is interpretive and non-academic: the intercolumnation is unconventional, the Corinthian capitals imaginative, and the proportion of the capitals in relation to the columns somewhat hefty. To the side, the pediments above the sash windows are merely water drips and the ash windows themselves are glazed with horizontal rather than vertical panes of glass, thus replicating horizontal the panels of traditional

shoji screens. **FIG 42** And, for all the apparent symmetry of the front and side elevations, **FIG 43** internally the axial plan is confounded by the steep stairs placed across the entrance hall. **FIG 44** The same disparity, but on a much grander scale is apparent at the Hohei-kan, **FIG 45** a large hotel for foreigners built in Sapporo by Adachi Yoshiyuki in 1880. **FIG 46** Here the elevation is a copy-book exemplar and the plan convincingly symmetrical, **FIG 47** apart from the two sets of stairs, both of which are off axis and thrust into the far corners of the entrance hall. **FIG 48**

Since the majority Japanese houses were single storey the building of two or three-storey structures in the Western style created problems for the Japanese carpenters when it came to the stairs. **FIG 49** In the two-storey Machiya, the traditional town houses still found in Kyoto, the stairs were actually hidden in a closet or *oshiire*, an approach adopted for one set of stairs in the schoolhouse in Matsumoto which we have already seen. The integration of the stairs, in the Western manner, as part of the building's circulation and their promotion as a design element of the plan was one of the most difficult things for Japanese carpenters to understand. **FIG 50** At the Nishitagawa District Office built by Kanekichi Takahashi in Tsuruoka in 1881, the stairs from the first to the second floor, located to the left of the entrance, are a tight curve of winders pressed close against the building's side wall, while those from the second to the third floor have a suspended half-landing. As the diminutive balusters in the one and the continuation of the cornice in the other suggest, these were surely not later additions.

In many of these examples, traditional detailing recalling Buddhist temples are incorporated within the Western ensemble. **FIG 51** This was very noticeable in the porch of the Matsumoto schoolhouse and can be seen in the Police Office in Tsuruoka, built by Takahashi in 1884. Here, and in the District Office opposite, what is referred to as *mitate*, or time-honoured Japanese building techniques, are employed as if they were Western architectural features: for example, the positioning of the dentils at 45 degrees to the corner of the cornice. Nevertheless, in some novel construction was employed. **FIG 52** At the Prefectural Assembly Hall in Niigata, built by Hoshino Soshiro in 1883, a triangulated queen- and king-post truss is used, for the first time, in preference to the traditional *tsuka* and *hari*, **FIG 53** or post and beam construction of Japanese roofs.

FIG 54 It might have been noticed that of all the *Giyōfū* architecture I have shown, none were domestic buildings intended for the Japanese: Glover and Alt's houses, as well as the Hohei-kan hotel, were for Westerners. The Japanese lived differently and in a manner unsuited to Western architectural forms. **FIG 55** Even the Iwasaki mansion at Yushima, which I showed first, is not as it might appear. Italianate, Jacobethan, pseudo-Saracenic, it was the confident work of a *Gaikokujin*, Josiah Conder, **FIG 56** and everything for which an aspiring, modern, Westernised Japanese would wish— except to live in. So to the rear, out of sight of guests who would marvel at the Western sophistication of their host, was a large domestic wing, **FIG 57** built in the traditional Japanese manner by Oakawa Kijuro. **FIG 58** Originally containing fourteen rooms on a single level, it was far more extensive than the main

house and provided all the traditional features necessary to making Hisaya Iwasaki and his family feel quite at home.

FIG 59 In this paper I have tried to show how, as a form of security, Japan adopted a policy of what I have called self-colonisation, resulting in official buildings being built in the Western style, first by invited foreigners — the *Gaikokujin* — and then by the university trained Japanese themselves. I have also tried to show how, at the same time, Japanese carpenters — the 'invaluable indigene' — imitated the Western style with their *Giyōfū* architecture, applying it to public buildings such as schools and police houses, and to the churches and homes they built for the foreigners. Late-nineteenth century Japanese architecture was, as with all academic and vernacular architectures, both a top-down and a bottom-up process. **FIG 60** But ultimately, whichever way the colonising Western influence went went, its adoption was for show, for when the Japanese built for themselves, and wanted to be really comfortable, they reverted, like in their dress, to what was traditional, familiar and safe.

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length when read aloud: 20 minutes